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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BAGHDAD 001081

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [IZ](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: MARCH 23 FARDH AL QANOON EXECUTIVE STEERING
COMMITTEE

REF: A. BAGHDAD 994
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1000

Classified By: DCM Daniel Speckhard, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The March 23 Fardh Al Qanoon (FAQ) Executive Steering Committee (ESC) continued to have several members absent including VP Mahdi, DPM Zawbai (due to assassination attempt), NSA Rubaie, Yassin Majeed, as well as other ministry officials. However, DPM Salih attended the meeting after several weeks of absence. Coalition leaders attending the meeting included the Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Deputy Commanding General. The focus of the meeting included the following: A discussion led by the PM regarding satellite channel coverage of FAQ and the need to develop a media campaign (paragraph 2); A report by General Abboud highlighting security elements of FAQ and requirements of other committees to support the plan (paragraphs 3-8); An update from the political committee and discussion including de-baathification military pensions, and extending an invitation to foreign ambassadors residing in Baghdad to review FAQ progress (paragraphs 9-12); A discussion of the current status of medical supplies and hospitals in Baghdad, however, the services committee was not discussed in detail due to the assassination attempt on DPM Zawbai earlier in the day (paragraphs 13 - 15); A reconfirmation by Ahmad Chalabi that he is currently focusing on mosque re-openings, ensuring the distribution of food rations to unstable areas, and detainee inquiries (paragraphs 16-19); An update from DPM Barham Salih regarding micro-credit loans (paragraph 20); and Closing Comments (paragraphs 21 - 22). End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The PM opened the meeting with an off-agenda discussion of satellite channel coverage of FAQ indicating he believed there was a media conspiracy against the operations with significant negative coverage. He mentioned there is no representation in the media of the achievements of FAQ and reinforced the need to develop public support from satellite channels through a media campaign. The PM indicated we cannot stop negative broadcasts, but we can confront the channels and was looking for ideas of what could be done to change the situation. He suggested setting rules and regulations and potentially restraining the movement of the media. Political committee member Hajim al-Hassani suggested weekly meetings with satellite channels indicating the need to show the before and after impact of FAQ operations. Sadik Al-Rekabie, political advisor to the PM, indicated that there are currently no laws that organize media activity and suggested that appropriate laws needed to be put in place to prevent false reporting. The Baghdad Provincial Governor, Hussein Al Tahan, highlighted the need for a media office that works explicitly for FAQ. Deputy National Security Advisor, General Safa, suggested the need for weekly reports on operations from both military and civilian spokesman. Finally, Ahmad Chalabi, chair of FAQ's popular mobilization committee, indicated that it is not advisable to constrain control of satellite channels and potentially start a battle

with the media. The focus needs to be on reporting achievements and improvements.

Security

13. (C) General Abboud briefed the ESC on security activity over the past week and also discussed linkages with other committees. In the previous ESC meeting (Ref A: Baghdad 994), Abboud indicated he plans to implement a reward program for the top Iraqi Security Force (ISF) units and checkpoints.

Abboud indicated he is postponing nomination of the best Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) until there has been more time to implement new requirements and assess performance.

14. (C) Abboud indicated the Ministry of Health (MoH) is now capable of delivering medicine, however, Ali al-Shammari, the Minister of Health, disagreed and indicated that until Thursday, Ministry officials had not tried to deliver medicine due to lack of security. There was disagreement as to whether or not Abboud had sent sufficient security forces to the pharmaceutical depot to facilitate delivery of medicine. On Thursday, the individual responsible for the depot indicated he did not see a single soldier in the vicinity of the depot and on Friday, there were three tanks present. Abboud sent individuals out to the depot and confirmed that a Company of soldiers was now present at the facility.

15. (C) Abboud suggested that the Ministry of Oil (MoO) must expedite the process for allocating fuel for forces citing that he does not have the capability to send people to Basrah.

16. (C) Abboud identified additional issues that must be dealt

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with going forward including: 1) crowds at religious events will have to be better managed and there must be an additional study of special occasions; 2) life must be brought back to the people; and 3) many properties are abandoned and buildings should be better utilized.

17. (C) Karim Wahid, the Minister of Electricity, indicated that 3 power stations had been burned in the last week. He mentioned a sniper has been hitting the feeding cable. Maintenance teams are being sent out, but they are being killed. Abboud suggested the establishment a liaison office to give information on maintenance team activities so they can be protected. The Governor of Baghdad, Hussein Al Tahan, suggested that another alternative for protecting maintenance teams would be to use the already available emergency battalions. He indicated there are two battalions under police command and they could address the situation.

18. (C) General Lamb reinforced that there must be a strong focus on electricity going forward. He mentioned the need to set up a Fusion Cell with the Ministry of Defense (MoD), MoO, and MoE. The Fusion Cell would basically be an operations room for energy related matters and General Lamb committed to brief the PM on this in more detail in the future. Additional commitment was provided by General Lamb to follow up on other issues including 1) supply of 100 fuel tankers to Al Qudas station to support the generation of electricity; 2) provision of assistance with the purchase of 7000 solar cells to boost electricity and illuminate the main streets and infrastructure; and 3) targeting of VBIED and IED factories outside of Baghdad.

Political Committee

19. (C) Political committee member Hajim al-Hassani reviewed the current status of the De-Baathification law. He indicated that a draft copy of the law had been prepared and that he hoped to see a timetable developed for completing the law. He reinforced that the de-baathification law is a very

important indication of development and shows the power of the Iraqi government. Hassani stated we need to peel the skin of Baathists and get to the skin of patriotism. He indicated he would like to have it completed by the next Arab Summit. He reinforced the desire to have an open dialogue with entities outside of the political process. DPM Barham Salih disagreed with Hassani about the de-baathification law and indicated the law needs to be redrafted. Salih stipulated that there needs to be assurances that Baathists do not come back. Salih did agree, however, that law needs to be agreed upon prior to the next Arabic Summit.

¶10. (C) Later in the meeting, Rekabie asked why the political committee was paying so much attention to de-baathification. Hassan indicated it was part of their initial plan as a committee. The plan was submitted and approved and it was a long term plan. Rekabie also asked why the views of other countries were being considering as Iraq does not get involved in their business. Hassan indicated that other countries have a substantial interest in de-baathification, which is a fact. Hassan also indicated the Constitution has an article explicitly talking about de-baathification. Finally, Hassan ended the conversation saying de-baathification is at the core of our tasks to resolve.

¶11. (C) Chalabi interjected the topic of military pensions into the discussion. He asked the PM for a decision to grant military ranks of Major and above wages equivalent to retirement and that this was an important step toward reconciliation. Chalabi indicated the procedure is straightforward and requires a discussion with the Minister of Finance (MoF). The PM indicated that the MoF is happy to fund this requirement.

¶12. (C) There was a follow up discussion about inviting foreign ambassadors resident in Baghdad to brief them on FAQ (Ref A: Baghdad 994). No progress had been made on this initiative over the last week. Hassani committed to following up on this with the PM's office to extend invitations.

Services Committee

¶13. (C) The services committee was not reviewed in detail. DPM Zawbai, chairman of the services committee was not in attendance due an assassination attempt on his life earlier in the day.

¶14. (C) The Minister of Health, Ali al-Shammari, indicated there is a continued shortage of essential medical supplies.

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¶15. (C) Chalabi initiated a discussion regarding Yarmouk hospital. He indicated that the wards of this hospital are in terrible condition with blood all over the floors as well as rubbish, mice, and rats in view. He indicated that other hospitals are in even worse condition. He indicated that there needs to be increased wages for cleaners in hospitals and also suggested that the Yarmouk hospital should be demolished. There was an indication that no decision had been made since the last ESC regarding increased wages for hospital employees. The PM agreed that there needs to be increased wages and staff at these hospitals. Shammari indicated that demolishing the hospital is not an option as it would take too long to rebuild.

Popular Mobilization Committee

¶16. (C) Ahmad Chalabi, chair of FAQ's popular mobilization committee, continued to reinforce what he told PRToffs March 21 that his latest efforts focus on mosque re-openings, ensuring the distribution of food rations to unstable areas,

and detainee inquiries. (Ref A: Baghdad 1000)

¶17. (C) Chalabi indicated that his committee has nominated people to work in the Baghdad Operations Center (BOC) and that they have also worked on announcing a hot line to receive complaints for food ration suppliers. The hot line will be coordinated through the BOC. The BOC will use its own trucks to transport supplies. Chalabi also discussed the re-opening of mosques. Chalabi also brought up the issue of detainees and mentioned the intolerable conditions in prisons such as Mahmoudiya that currently houses 673 prisoners. Chalabi mentioned that his lawyers were not able to meet with detainees. The Minister of Interior, Jawad Al Bolanie, indicated he had formed three committees to review detention facilities. He indicated he cannot just open the doors of detention facilities to lawyers. Lawyers have to be appointed by the detainee and the mechanisms to visit facilities need to be well coordinated. Chalabi reinforced that detention issues have not been solved, the mechanisms are the same, and detainees cannot recruit or visit with lawyers. Bolanie indicated he would meet with Chalabi's lawyers to discuss the issues.

¶18. (C) Chalabi mentioned that his committees are making it clear that Joint Security Stations (JSS) are located everywhere in Baghdad and not just targeting Shia in Sadr City.

¶19. Trade Ministry official Naim Aziz indicated that the main problem with distributing food rations is delivering food to the suppliers.

Media Committee

¶19. (C) The committee co-leader Yassin Majeed was not present. Rekabie went through a brief discussion of some slides that were provided to give an update on media committee activity for the previous week. He also reviewed a poster that was created to show soldiers helping citizens.

Economics Committee

¶20. (C) DPM Barham Salih discussed an update on micro-credit loans. It was indicated that the MoF had agreed to provide \$50 million to fund micro projects, which would be paid for from emergency funds. The loans would be at 1.5% interest and the MoF had promised to allocate the budget. The PM asked that if MoF allocates \$50 million can it be implemented. The MoLSA representative indicated that it could be implemented, but requested that it should target the neediest of citizens.

Closing Comments

¶21. (C) Hassani indicated this would be the last ESC meeting with the participation of Ambassador Khalilzad. Hassani praised the Ambassador as being extraordinary. The Ambassador thanked Hassani for his comments and praised the ESC for making progress in their efforts to synchronize the non military aspects of FAQ. As a final suggestion, the Ambassador reinforced an idea suggested earlier in the meeting by General Safa to appoint Executive Directors within each committee to meet on a regular basis to make the meetings more effective.

¶22. (C) Comment: The ESC is continuing to make slow progress

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as an effective body in synchronizing efforts related to FAQ; however, there continues to be significant off-agenda conversation. Additional effort is being taken to ensure the ESC remains focused on taking action and reporting progress.

End Comment.
SPECKHARD